

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BOGOTA 08592 082142Z
ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 8592

LIMDIS

FOR RADM VENZKE FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SNAR CO
SUBJECT: USCG/COLOMBIAN JOINT OPERATIONS

REF: COMDT COGARD 060645Z SEP 78

1. IN A JOINT PLANNING SESSION FOR THE GUAJIRA OPERATION SEPTEMBER 7, MINISTER OF DEFENSE CAMACHO EXPRESSED TO ME THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY'S GREAT CONCERN THAT ANY ACTION BE AVOIDED THAT WOULD PROVIDE A PRETEXT FOR PUBLIC CRITICISM AS THE ARMED FORCES LAUNCH AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE COUNTRY'S ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT. IN THIS CONTEXT, THE MINISTER SPECIFICALLY FEARED THAT THE USE OF U.S. MANNED AND COMMANDED EQUIPMENT SUCH AS AIRCRAFT OR SHIPS MIGHT BE CONSTRUED AS AN INFRINGEMENT OF COLOMBIAN SOVEREIGNTY WITH THE CONNIVANCE OF THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY. TO AVOID GIVING THIS PRETEXT TO ELEMENTS WHO MIGHT OPPOSE THE PROGRAM FOR A VARIETY OF POLITICAL REASONS, THE MINISTER DECIDED THERE SHOULD BE NO DIRECT PARTICIPATION OF U.S. PERSONNEL IN THE PROGRAM INITIALLY.

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2. THE MINISTER'S POLITICAL JUDGMENT IN THIS MATTER HAS CONSIDERABLE MERIT, AND DESPITE THE ADVANTAGES OF MORE ACTIVE AND DIRECT U.S. SUPPORT, WE RESPECT HIS DECISION. HOWEVER, AS THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY BECOMES MORE INVOLVED IN THE MISSION, THE NEED FOR SUPPORT USING SOPHISTICATED U.S. EQUIPMENT AND SKILLED PERSONNEL WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY APPARENT. ALSO, AS THE OPERATION CONTINUES, THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY SHOULD FEEL

MORE AT EASE WITH THEIR NEW ROLE SO THAT SOME OF THE
POLITICAL RESERVATIONS TOWARD THE U.S. IN DIRECT SUPPORTING
ROLES SHOULD DIMINISH.

3. I HAVE ALREADY HAD INDICATIONS FROM OTHER COLOMBIAN
MILITARY FIGURES THAT REQUESTS FOR DIRECT U.S. SUPPORT WILL
BE FORTHCOMING LATER. I HAVE WARNED THEM AS WELL AS THE
MINISTER, HOWEVER, THAT LEAD TIME FOR PLANNING AND SCHEDULING
WILL BE REQUIRED AND THAT THE DESIRED EQUIPMENT CAN NOT BE
EXPECTED ON A SPUR OF THE MOMENT BASIS.

4. I AND MY STAFF HAVE LONG ADVOCATED A ROLE FOR THE USCG
IN THE PROGRAM HERE AND WE CONTINUE TO BE CONVINCED OF ITS
POTENTIAL VALUE. IT IS WITH A GREAT DEAL OF RELUCTANCE THAT
WE MUST FOREGO THE PROPOSED USCG CUTTER OPERATIONS OFF THE
GUAJIRA FOR THE TIME BEING. I BELIEVE HOWEVER, THAT THIS
WILL BE ONLY A TEMPORARY DELAY AND THAT THE USCG SERVICES
WILL BE REQUESTED AGAIN IN THE NEAR FUTURE.
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